

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**South Shore School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

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Dates of On Site Visit: December 8th and 9th 2003

Date of Report: December 9, 2003

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- District/agency instructional staff information
- Suspension and expulsion information
- Statewide assessment information
- Enrollment information
- Placement alternatives
- Disabling conditions

- Exiting information
- Parent survey, referrals, publications of child find notices
- Comprehensive plan
- Yearly child find results
- Special education expenditures
- Private school information
- Child count data
- SIMS data
- Individual education programs
- Budget
- Comprehensive plan
- Workshops and in-services
- Area training/TTL
- Continuing education
- Employee handbook
- Board policies
- File reviews
- Surveys
- NEC policy handbook

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded a teacher assistant team meets to help students prior to referral. Many times, a referral is not needed due to assistance provided in the regular classroom.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded a system is in effect for documenting and submitting referrals. District policies and procedures address the referral process. The district does not have a child placed in a private school at this time. Students placed out of district have the same rights as students in the district.

The district uses relevant school data to analyze and review student progress toward the state performance goals and indicators. All teachers attended a data retreat to help them realize where the student's scores are in relation to the advanced and proficiency levels of accountability. The areas assessed focused on math problem solving and reading comprehension. All special education teachers participated in the retreat.

The school district adheres to the state guidelines for reporting students suspended, expelled, or dropped out. South Shore has had no student drop out.

The South Shore School District meets the requirements for certified staff. Two teachers have an authority to act. The South Shore school district meets the needs of the staff and encourages them to attend workshops.

Needs improvement

The paraprofessionals are not formally evaluated. They will attend training in August to prepare for the certification examination as a paraprofessional.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Based upon interviews with district staff, the monitoring team did not validate the teacher assistance team (TAT) process as an area of promising practice as concluded by the steering committee. The case of pre-referral intervention is a common practice and generally encouraged for all students

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee. The Northeast Educational Cooperative has initiated a training program for paraprofessionals in order to meet the certification requirements for No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Therefore, the team considers paraprofessional training an area that meets requirements.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables E,F,K, L, M, N
- Number of students screened
- Preschool age
- School age
- Budget information
- Surveys
- Age at referral
- Personal training
- Comprehensive plan
- Personnel development education

Promising practice

The South Shore district offers a pre-school for all students in their district 2 days a week at no charge.

Meets requirements

Current practices and past reviews from the state and federal special education monitoring demonstrate the school district provides a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities. All information is available to the monitoring team to review for assurances of this statement.

Current practices demonstrate the school district provides free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through interview, the monitoring team concluded the district preschool program is an area of promising practice as concluded by the steering committee. The preschool program is open to all children in the district, ages four and five. Half day services are provided two days per week with the kindergarten class. A certified paraprofessional is assigned to assist with the preschool children. Parents are requesting an additional day of preschool service for next school year.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables G, H, I, J,
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- TAT information
- IEPs
- Parental report forms
- Initial referral
- Teacher report forms
- Permission to evaluate forms
- File reviews
- Psychology reports
- Report cards
- Referrals
- Progress reports
- Comprehensive plan
- SIMS data

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded the district is in compliance with evaluation procedures. A parent report form is sent to parents of students who are to be evaluated. The IEP team considers all evaluation data to determine the appropriate category of disability for the student. The district provides documentation of eligibility determination to the parent. The school district adheres to proper re-evaluation procedures to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continued eligibility.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded functional evaluations are not always conducted for initial or re-evaluation.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting requirements for appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

Through interview and a review of student records, the monitoring team determined functional evaluation is an area that meets the requirements. Through a review of 7 of 7 student files, functional evaluations were conducted each time it was required as part the student's initial evaluation or reevaluation.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State data tables L and M
- Teacher file reviews
- Parental right document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Public awareness information
- FERPA disclosure
- Comprehensive plan
- Surrogate document
- Surveys
- Training data
- SPED handbook
- Student Files
- School newsletters

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded parents are consistently informed of their rights. The district's comprehensive plan outlines surrogate parent requirements. Parents are informed of all information relevant to the provision of extended school year. The district comprehensive plan addresses procedures for confidentiality and access to records. The district has not had a complaint or due process hearing request in the past 4 years. All procedures for a due process hearing are addressed in the comprehensive plan.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting requirements for procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Out of compliance

24:05:30:04. Prior notice and parent consent.

Written notice which meets the requirements of § 24:05:30:05 must be given to the parents five days before the district proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of a free appropriate public education to the child.

Through interview and a review of student records, the monitoring team found consent was not obtained for evaluations administered to students in 3 files. For example, a social skill assessment and a behavior evaluation were administered but were not included on the prior notice/consent signed by the parent. Transition evaluations were administered, on 2-28-03 and another on 11-14-03, without parent consent. A Brigance Inventory of Early Development was administered to a student on 11-03 without parental consent.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- File reviews
- Student progress data
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- State data K and N
- Report form
- Surveys
- Complaints
- File reviews
- Student progress data
- Budget information
- Personnel training
- IEP's
- SPED handbook

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded policies and procedures provide for regular educators to attend all team meetings. Written notice provided to parents contains the required content. Outside agencies are invited to the meetings for students of transition age. Present levels of performance include student strengths and weaknesses in all areas of disability. Present levels of performance are linked to functional evaluation. District procedures ensure IEPs are appropriately developed and in effect for each eligible student.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded students are not consistently informed that rights transfer one year prior to age 18.

Out of compliance

The steering committee concluded IEPs were not consistently reviewed on an annual basis.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting requirements for individual education program as concluded by the steering committee, with the exception of the content of present levels of performance.

Through interview and a review of student records the monitoring team determined that the transfer of rights to student meets requirements under content of the IEP. In 100 % of the files reviewed, a meeting was held one year prior to the student turning age 18, to discuss the transfer of rights.

Through a review of 6 of 6 student files, the monitoring team validated an IEP team meeting was held to review and revise the IEP at least annually.

Needs Improvement

24:05:27:13.02 Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Through interview and a review of 3 student files, the team found justification statements written to include services the district, student and family would be pursuing in order for the student to move from school to post-school activities. The activities/services must be documented as "services to be provided". The team also must identify a person responsible to ensure the services are provided, including initiation dates for the services.

Out of Compliance

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the specific skill areas affected by the student's disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. Present levels of performance must contain the student's strength, needs, effect of the disability on the student's involvement/progress in the general curriculum and parent input. In 8 of 10 files reviewed, present levels of performance did not consistently contain the student's involvement or progress in the general curriculum or strength in the skill areas affected by the disability.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

Present level of performance:

A statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, related to:

- (a) Meeting the student's needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum; and
- (b) Meeting each of the student's other educational needs that result from the student's disability.

In 3 files reviewed, annual goals did not represent a skill the student could reasonably accomplish within a 12 month period. For example, "he will work on anger management helping him to deal with anger in a positive manner," and "he will understand classroom vocabulary."

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program.

The IEP must contain an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with non-disabled students in the regular class and in activities described in this section.

Through interview and a review of 6 files, the team determined the justification for placement did not address the student's instructional needs resulting in the removal from the regular classroom setting. For example, "he will be able to receive the help he needs with written language, spelling, vocabulary and counseling."

24:05:27:01.02. Development, review, and revision of individualized education program.

In developing, reviewing, and revising each student's individualized education program, the team shall consider the strengths of the student and the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their student, the results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the student, and as appropriate, the results of the student's performance on any general state or district-wide assessment programs. The individualized education program team also shall:

- (1) In the case of a student whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others, consider, if appropriate, strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports, to address that behavior.

Through interview and a review of 4 files, behavior was cited as a concern and evaluations were administered. When addressing whether the behavior impedes learning, the IEPs stated, "no plan is needed, the student is seeing the counselor." The present levels of performance for another student identified specific behavioral needs. The IEP team checked "no" for this student, when considering if the behavior of the student impeded their learning.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment
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After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables E,G, I, J, F, and N
- File reviews
- Surveys

Meets requirements

The school district has policies and procedures for addressing a student's least restrictive environment. Behavioral Intervention Plans have been written for students who require them. Student placements are done on an individual basis by the IEP team.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements as concluded by the steering committee.